

Interagency

Wilderness Strategic Plan

1995

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE

Wilderness Stewardship -

A STRATEGIC PLAN

1994 marked the thirtieth anniversary of one of the most important pieces of legislation in the second half of the 20th Century -- Public Law 88-577, known as the "Wilderness Act." The National Wilderness Preservation System now encompasses more than 100 million acres, and the the ideals of protecting wilderness values have spread around the globe.

The Federal agencies charged with the stewardship of these priceless areas have made great strides in the thirty years since the Wilderness Act. Nevertheless, it has been over ten years since our agencies last assessed our collective efforts and set forth a coordinated program of action. We feel that the time is right for re-dedicating and focusing our agencies' efforts.

To secure the benefits of wilderness as called for in the Wilderness Act, we offer this Strategic Plan. Management actions are identified and grouped into five broad topics. While some of these actions are more general than others, and they all may not be equally important to each of our agencies, our commitment to progress in every one of these areas is unequivocal.

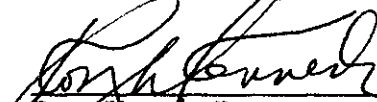
America's "enduring resource of wilderness" is too important for anything less.



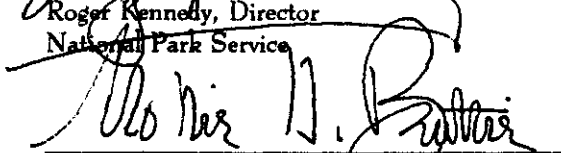
Mike Dombeck, Director
Bureau of Land Management



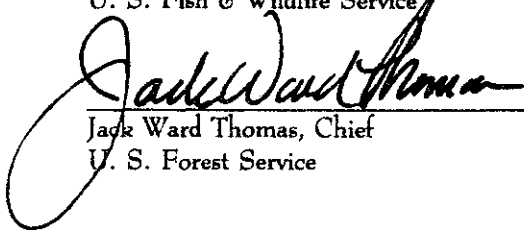
H. Ronald Pulliam, Director
National Biological Service



Roger Kennedy, Director
National Park Service



Mollie H. Beattie, Director
U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service



Jack Ward Thomas, Chief
U. S. Forest Service

1. PRESERVATION OF NATURAL & BIOLOGICAL VALUES

In the first thirty years of wilderness stewardship, the preservation of natural processes has emerged as one of the most significant values of wilderness. Wilderness areas serve as a foundation for healthy, diverse ecosystems. Wilderness has a role in our national efforts to protect bio-diversity and we will place greater emphasis on this aspect of our stewardship. Without management of natural values, the underlying fabric of the National Wilderness Preservation System is at risk.

Therefore, we will:

- A. Manage wilderness within the context of larger landscapes to ensure the protection and integrity of natural and biological processes.
- B. Inventory wilderness ecosystems to collect baseline data. Identify indicators and develop monitoring standards for those elements critical to ecological integrity. Develop monitoring strategies for high priority indicators and provide feedback for adaptive management. Where appropriate, establish long-term research programs.
- C. Restore wilderness ecosystems damaged by humans to the degree feasible. Identify the processes needed to assess, restore, or mitigate human-induced change.
- D. Restore fire to its natural role in the ecosystem.
- E. Implement integrated exotic plant and animal management which includes prevention, education, detection, quick elimination of spot infestations, and control of major occurrences.
- F. Exchange, purchase, or retire uses adversely affecting wilderness values where rights-holders are willing.
- G. Pursue acquisition or exchange of inholdings, subsurface rights, and adjacent lands critical to wilderness protection.

2. MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL VALUES

Social values are a fundamental component of wilderness. We need to retain spiritual and psychological values, and guarantee opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation in areas retaining their primeval character and influence.

Therefore, we will:

- A. Evaluate all existing and proposed structures and installations to minimize the impact on wilderness values.
- B. Emphasize opportunities outside wilderness for recreation activities that are not dependent on a wilderness setting.
- C. Coordinate with neighboring agencies and interests on wilderness use restrictions (such as campsite and fire regulations) and on the establishment of policies for limits such as group size and numbers of packstock.
- D. Coordinate with Department of Defense agencies and the Federal Aviation Administration to develop procedures and guidelines to avoid or mitigate low-level overflights.
- E. Develop, identify, and distribute information on new or evolving recreation management tools and techniques.
- F. Establish an interagency national information network to provide wilderness information for public and agency use.
- G. Assess impacts of new and emerging technologies on traditional wilderness values. Develop public information and education programs to address these effects and mitigate any unacceptable impacts.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY AND INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

The stewardship of the National Wilderness Preservation System is important to each of our agencies. We are committed to elevating the stature of wilderness management to that of a full and equal partner in each agency's mission. At the same time, we realize that there is one National Wilderness Preservation System. To efficiently manage this diverse system we must work together.

To improve efficiency in administration and enhance our interagency communication, we are resolved to:

- A. Maintain strong and professional leadership in wilderness stewardship at all levels. Each will:
 - have a national wilderness coordinator; and
 - require wilderness stewardship performance elements for those managing wilderness.
- B. Create a National Interagency Steering Committee made up of the national wilderness coordinators of each agency to improve interagency understanding and consistency in managing the National Wilderness Preservation System, including:
 - developing common guidelines, policies, and regulations on key wilderness issues;
 - identifying and coordinating research priorities for the Aldo Leopold Research Institute, and training priorities with the Arthur Carhart Training Center;
- C. Coordinate multiple-unit wildernesses to insure consistent administration.
- D. Expand the emphasis of research to include natural and biological wilderness resources, and psychological and social values.
- E. Aggressively seek new partnerships with diverse groups to support wilderness values and goals.
- F. Participate in local government planning efforts to represent the wilderness resource.
- G. Ensure fiscal accountability in the budget process by identifying and tracking funding sources and accomplishments in the wilderness program.
- H. Allow flexible spending of fire funding to cover prescribed fire.

4. TRAINING OF AGENCY PERSONNEL

Historically, wilderness training has concentrated on wilderness specialists. We must now expand wilderness training to our interdisciplinary staffs and line officers to assure all personnel are adequately equipped for their stewardship role.

We will implement the following improvements:

- A. Identify the core competencies required for wilderness rangers, wilderness managers, and line officers with wilderness management responsibility. Identify tools, methods, and techniques to master the needed abilities.
- B. Integrate wilderness into other program training and *vice versa*. Develop basic wilderness orientation training for presentation to all agency personnel.
- C. Develop common understanding and training on wilderness principles such as the minimum tool concept.
- D. Continue to develop, utilize, and support wilderness training programs.
- E. Each agency will support the Arthur Carhart Training Center and the Aldo Leopold Research Institute.
- F. Establish partnerships with colleges and universities to recruit volunteers, participate in curriculum development, provide training, and conduct research.

5. PUBLIC AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Educating the public has long been considered an important function of stewardship. In the past, this has largely meant training wilderness visitors in low-impact camping techniques and user ethics. Wilderness education needs to expand beyond instructing visitors to build a shared understanding of the role and value of wilderness to society. The wilderness message needs to reach the a much broader spectrum of the American public.

To accomplish this we will:

- A. Evaluate wilderness education programs to determine their effectiveness.
- B. Identify strategies to communicate wilderness education messages to diverse cultural, geographical, and sociological groups, including non-recreation users.
- C. Develop a wilderness curriculum for grades K through 12. Encourage state agencies to establish curricula for environmental/wilderness education in schools.
- D. Continue to support "Leave No Trace" as the official program for minimum impact recreation.
- E. Develop a strategy to use national and local media in wilderness education.